

Ethics Consultation

Beyond the Basics



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
National Center for Ethics in Health Care

Module 6

Getting Off to the Right Start in a
Formal Ethics Consultation
Meeting

Learning Objectives

- Understand the importance of the right start to a formal ethics consultation meeting.
- Plan and prepare for a formal meeting.
- Identify improvement opportunities in starting a meeting (self-assessment).
- Describe the ethics consultant's role.

CASES Link



***SYNTHESIZE* the Information**

Determine whether a formal meeting is needed

Engage in ethical analysis

Identify the ethically appropriate decision maker

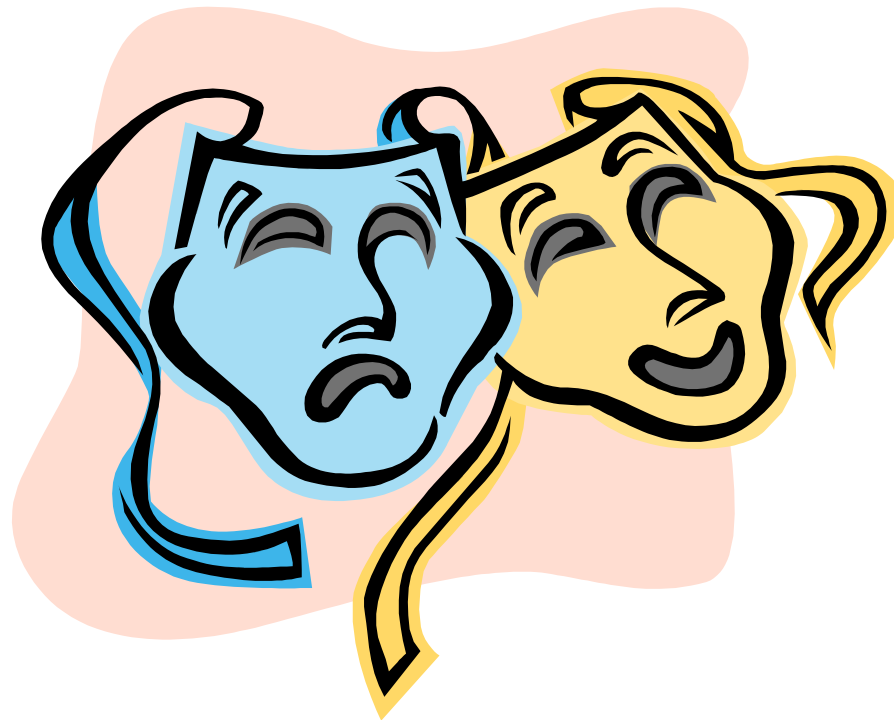
Facilitate moral deliberation among ethically justifiable options

Group Activity Instructions

Handout 6.1

1. Read Case History and Cast of Characters (pages 2 and 3 on handout).
2. Take your positions.
3. “Action.”

Discussion: A Critical Review of the Meeting



Planning

1. Determine if a formal meeting is needed.

Criteria

- Parties are not confident they have been heard.
- Parties don't understand others' points of view.
- Many different parties are involved.

Considerations

- Will it delay the process?
- Will it be efficient?
- Will participants voice their points of view?
- Do you have all the facts you need?

Planning

Once you have determined to hold a formal meeting:

2. Set goals.
3. Select participants.
4. Contact key participants.
5. Schedule meeting; invite all participants.

Preparation

- Review your notes.
- Practice introducing yourself as the ethics consultant.
- Anticipate questions and how you might address them.

Starting Off Right: Self-Assessment

Prior to the meeting	Almost Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Almost Always
Review the information you have gathered.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practice explaining your role as the ethics consultant.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Think through the challenges you may face in the meeting and how you may respond to them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Print copies of the Ground Rules to bring to the meeting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seating arrangements	Almost Never	Occasionally	Frequently	Almost Always
I allow participants to determine seating on their own. (Watching where parties sit will often give the ethics consultant information about connections and aversions.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I encourage seating arrangements whereby the patient or family member sits next to those members of the treatment team with whom they have the best rapport, or to break up	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Starting Off Right: Self-Assessment Discussion

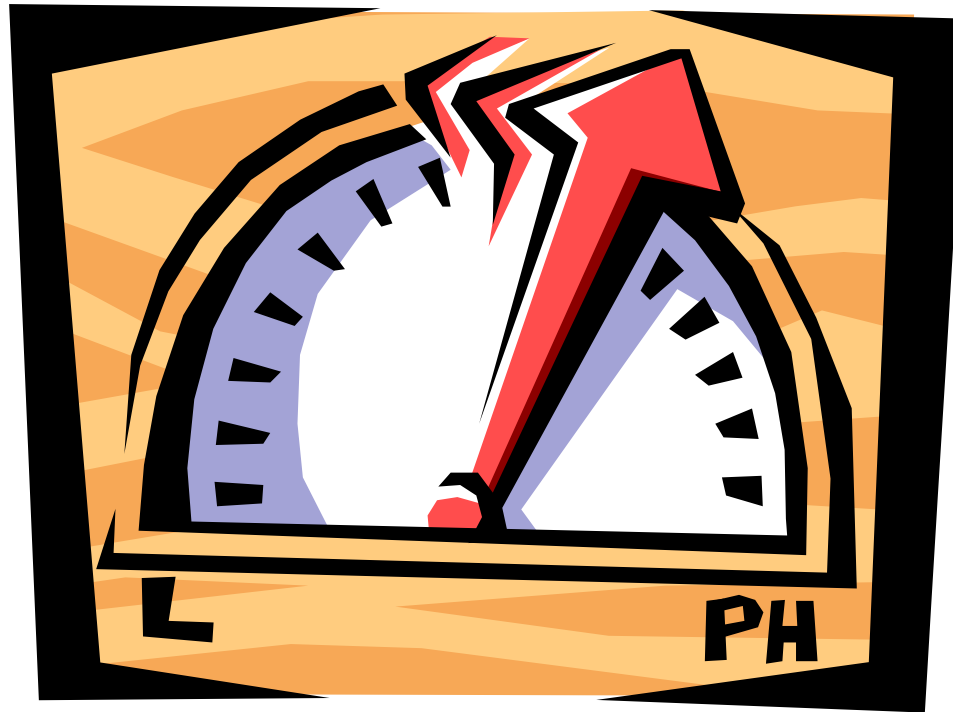
- Which steps do you do well?
- Which steps do you still need to master?

Ground Rules

GROUND RULES IN A FORMAL MEETING

- **Agree on how long the meeting will last.**
- **Turn phones and beepers to “vibrate” (if appropriate).**
- **Try to speak in terms that can be understood by everyone.**
- **Assure patients/family that their perspective has equal stature with that of clinicians.**
- **Listen to everyone else.**

“Elevator Speech”



Group Activity Instructions

Handout 6.4

Individually

1. Develop first draft of elevator speech.
2. Try out speech silently, and time it.

In groups of 4 or 5

1. Assign timekeeper.
2. Read speeches in turn—no critique.
3. Discuss what worked well in speeches.
4. Rework individual speeches. Adapt or adopt from others.
5. Choose volunteer to share with large group.

Activity: Murphy's Law Reprised

Handout 6.1

Dr. Paula Pierce takes control of the meeting.

- Who will play Sonia? (confused)
- Who will play Lamar? (mouthy teenager)

Takeaways

Getting off to the right start in a formal ethics consultation meeting

- Planning and preparing effectively for the meeting
- Opportunities to improve
- A clear and succinct description of the ethics consultant's role

Questions

Questions?